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ABSTRACT

This document presents the standards for social work in the field of child protective services created by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The first section describes the relationship between the social work profession and child protective services. Section II describes the goals and objectives of the standards. Section III presents and interprets the first six standards for social work in child protection. These six standards are classified as standards for attainment of competence for all social workers in child protective services. Section IV presents and interprets standards 7 through 11, standards for the administrator of the child protective services agency. Standards 12 through 16 are presented in section V on standards for the child protective services supervisor. Standards 17 through 36 are explained in section VI on standards for the child protective services worker. These standards consider the social worker's responsibility to families and parents (standards 17-23), endangered children (standards 24-28), the agency (standards 29-34), and the community (standards 35-36). The next section explains standards 37 through 40, delineating the minimum child protective practice expectations of social workers who are employed in settings other than child protective services. The document concludes with a taxonomy of standards for social work practice in child protection and a summary of major principles from NASW's Code of Ethics. (NB)

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NASW standards for social work practice in child protection

Prepared by the NASW Task Force on Social Work Practice in Child Protection.

Approved by the Board of Directors, National Association of Social Workers, at its meeting on February 14, 1981.



Introduction

Concern for the conditions of children springs from deep personal emotion as well as the broad social desire to ensure the preservation of humanity. Yet, in most contemporary societies children are rated low on the list of social and economic priorities. Often, they suffer from benign neglect at best, or are the victims of physical, sexual or emotional abuse and exploitation.

The social work profession is strongly rooted in the tradition of social reform, much of which was directed toward alleviating the problems of children in post-industrial society. Voluntary agencies and governmental services for children were created by concerned citizens and public officials during the last seventy years, usually in a minority struggle against dominant interests.

Today, millions of children are the recipients of some form of social service while many others in need are still not reached. Public agencies alone, for example, provide social services to approximately two million children. Nearly a third of these are in foster family homes or institutions, with two-thirds of those known to the agency for a year or more. Neglect and abuse are the most frequently cited reasons why children receive social service assistance, accounting for 22 percent of the children served.

Recent studies have shown that child welfare services are at their lowest point in many decades, having deteriorated in the last ten years under the neglectful policies of national, state and local officials. A principal cause of that deterioration is recognized as the substitution of cheap labor for

qualified personnel. Seventy-five percent of the children receiving child welfare service are served by persons having no training in their work, a reversal of previous policy and practice. The Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Protection, here published, set forth clearly the criteria for personnel serving children at all levels of agency structure, and at the same time provide a means for making that personnel accountable for their service.

In many ways, the limitations of current social services to children in need and their families, are only surface social indicators of significant changes in cultural values. They reflect the pervasiveness of our tendency to project our personal and social antipathies onto the young of our society, the citizens of the future, and to resist allocating sufficient resources to their upbringing and care. If we are to protect these children and serve them well, there must be competent agents of intervention backed by the commitment and resources of our society. If we are to prevent cruelty towards children, society will have to listen to the lessons learned by their agents, the professional social workers. If we are to preserve a democratic society and prepare for healthier, more peaceful future generations, we must place the value of our children as the highest ethic. We hope that the publication of these Standards will advance that cause.

Chauncey A. Alexander, ACSW, CAE
Executive Director
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I.

The Social Work Profession and Child Protective Services

Child protective services agencies have responsibility for ensuring that assessment, treatment, and prevention services are available to children and families encountering problems related to child abuse and neglect. Other human services agencies have responsibility for supplementing these child protective services efforts. To carry out these responsibilities fully, there must be professional activities directed toward helping individuals, families, and communities, and there must be a demonstration of professional values, knowledge, and skills which is integrated into the helping process. The profession of social work offers the activities, the values, the knowledge, and skills necessary to intervene in behalf of endangered children and their families.

Social work is defined as the system of organized activities carried on by a person with particular knowledge, competence and values, designed to help individuals, groups, or communities toward a mutual adjustment between themselves and their social environment. With respect to child protection, the social worker must provide services and organized activities toward the specific goal of enhancing the safety and well-being of the child. To achieve this goal, the social worker in child protective services accepts a unique, and often difficult, professional challenge.

The social work profession provides the framework for meeting this challenge. However, the social worker in child protective services must also demonstrate an expertise in intervening into the private lives of families, frequently on an involuntary basis. Such intervention requires acceptance of unique legal and professional responsibility as well as the capacity to work simultaneously with the child, the parents, other child welfare services, multiple community service systems, and the courts.

The NASW "Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Protection" recognizes both the core and specialized aspects of social work which are necessary to alleviate the social, economic, and personal conditions contributing to child abuse and neglect. The Standards are established with underlying professional commitments to:

- View the family as a dynamic system, affected by, and part of, larger social systems;
- Seek new knowledge, increase understanding of self, and refine skills;
- Work with other professionals and community agencies toward improved services for children and families; and,
- Support needed legislative and institutional change within and outside the child protective service system in behalf of children and families.

Further, the Standards represent the professional commitment to establish a level of competence expected of all social workers employed by child protective services agencies.

II. The Goals and Objectives of the Standards

The goals of the Standards are to:

- Document that the ethics, values, knowledge, and skills of the social work profession best prepare child protective services (CPS) staff for effective intervention;
- Establish professional expectations so that social workers can monitor, evaluate, and improve their own practices; and,
- Establish professional expectations so that boards of directors, administrators and others can determine the adherence of social workers to these expectations.

Toward these goals, the Standards also have the objectives to:

- Define the ethics, values, specialized knowledge, and skills of all social workers in CPS—administrators, supervisors, and child protective services workers—toward meeting the needs and capitalizing upon the strengths of the child, the parents, and the family; and in accepting the responsibilities to the agency, colleagues, other professionals, and the community;
- Establish the professional expectations of CPS agency administrators and supervisors so that effective social work practice can be maintained and promoted, and, in turn, so that effective intervention can occur; for example, expectations in the areas of policy development, administrative leadership and support, and program and staff development;
- Identify the expectations of social workers in carrying out all phases of direct CPS intervention—intake, assessment, service planning, service provision, and termination; and,
- Establish the basic child protective expectations of social workers in settings other than CPS with regard to case identification, reporting, collaboration, and advocacy.

III.

Standards for Attainment of Competence for all Social Workers in Child Protective Services

The Standards presented in this section document the ethics, values, knowledge requirements, and skills of all social workers engaged in CPS—administrators, supervisors, and child protective services workers. They provide the foundation for the attainment of social work competence in all Standards presented in subsequent sections.

STANDARD 1. Social Workers in CPS Shall Meet the Expectations of Conduct Established by the *NASW Code of Ethics*

The *NASW Code of Ethics* establishes the ethical responsibilities of all social workers with respect to: themselves; clients; colleagues; employees and employing organizations; the social work profession; and to society. Acceptance of these responsibilities guides and fosters competent social work practice in all child protective tasks and activities.

STANDARD 2. Social Workers in CPS Shall Demonstrate, Throughout All Their Child Protective Tasks and Activities, Acceptance of Specific Professional Values

The professional values considered most critical to social work practice in CPS are:

- Acceptance of one's own humanness with a commitment to continued pursuit of personal and professional growth;
- Acknowledgement of one's own values, attitudes and biases about children, families, child rearing practices, ethnic and cultural differences, along with awareness of the potential impact of these personal feelings upon professional decision making;
- Belief in the capacity of people to change and the desire of most parents to be good parents;
- Recognition of the dignity of the child as an individual with both a right to adequate care and a stake in a continuing family relationship;
- Commitment to the child's family as the preferred unit of child rearing and nurturing;

- Commitment to assist in meeting the physical, emotional, social, educational, moral, and vocational needs of children so that they have: sufficient nurturance, care, protection, guidance and control; feelings of being loved and worthy; a sense of trust, belonging and security; opportunities to depend on an adult who is responsible for seeing that these needs are met, for protecting them from harm and from their own impulses, and for guarding and controlling them until they are able to do these things for themselves;

- Commitment to fostering the rights of children; for example, their rights to be protected against all forms of abuse, neglect, cruelty, and exploitation; to have opportunities that promote their healthy development, permanent and consistent care, and participation whenever decisions regarding their care and needs are made; and to have their privacy and confidential disclosures respected;

- Commitment to fostering the rights of parents; for example, their rights to be informed fully about the limits of confidentiality in CPS situations; to have their privacy respected; to fulfill their role as responsible for their children; to determine for themselves, within the limits set by society, how they will rear their children; and to have available the services and resources that will stimulate and strengthen their parental functioning, or that clearly determine that they are unable to give their children satisfactory care in their own homes;

- Belief that child neglect, abuse, and exploitation are more likely to be symptoms of social and economic deprivations and personal problems rather than of willful, premeditated malice; and,

- Recognition of society's responsibility to children and the need of the CPS agency and its staff to be accountable to the community in providing child protective services.

STANDARD 3. Social Workers in CPS Shall Display Knowledge Basic to the Social Work Profession and an Understanding of the Social Institutions, Organizations and Resources Serving Children and Families

The knowledge requirements considered fundamental to all social work practice, and which are met by completion of BSW and MSW programs within

accredited colleges and universities, include knowledge of:

- The history and development of social work, and the problems for which social work offers remedies;
- Human growth and behavior; normal development; developmental stages; human needs and motivations; feelings, behaviors and activities of children; problems of childhood; the effect of school difficulties upon children and families;
- The theory, principles and methods of social work, including casework, group work, community organization, administration, supervision, planning and research;
- Cultural, political and legal structures, processes, and practices;
- Economic factors affecting individuals and communities; for example, cost of living, standards of living, unemployment rates, benefits and services;
- Contributions to social work from other disciplines, including the biological, psychological, and social sciences;
- The purpose and structure of social and child welfare services agencies, public and voluntary; the functions of the relationships among Federal, State, and local agencies;
- The functions of and services provided by schools, health, mental health, and medical agencies, including special education services, child guidance services, parenting and life enrichment courses; and
- The interrelationship between the individual and the family, the group, the neighborhood, the community, and societal systems.

STANDARD 4. Social Workers in CPS Shall Possess Specialized Knowledge and Understanding About Children and Families and About the Dynamics of Child Abuse and Neglect

Areas of knowledge about children and families required for effective CPS intervention encompass a number of professional fields. This includes knowledge of:

- Theories of personality development, determinants of personality such as congenital endowment, experiences within the family, conditions,

In this policy statement, the terms "BSW" and "MSW" will refer to all programs accredited by the Council on Social Work Education at baccalaureate and master's levels, respectively.

opportunities in the environment, and cultural influences;

- Methods of child rearing and child care including basic health care; cultural differences affecting child rearing; learning and social experiences appropriate to different stages of development; guidance, discipline and formation of ideas and values;

- The concept of family culture, including the role of the family in meeting the needs of children; the importance of parents to children; emotional aspects of parent-child relationships, responsibilities, obligations, duties, and rights of parents; factors affecting parental capacity to meet their children's needs; the effects of deprivation of parental care;

- The indicators of and interrelationships between physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect; the dynamics of families who abuse or neglect their children; the impact of socio-economic stress upon families; and the evaluation of risk to the child.

- Problems of children resulting from abuse and neglect or from parental incapacity to fulfill adequately the functions of parenthood; the effects on children of parental personality disturbances and marital conflicts; the effects of partial separation from parents, as in day care, and of separation as in foster family care; the problems involved in divided allegiance in cases of parental conflict, broken homes, or in placement; the effect on children of repeated changes in living arrangements; the effects of adverse community conditions, cultural or inter-racial problems; and

- Parental feelings and attitudes associated with: asking for help in relation to the child; partially or fully surrendering the child-rearing function; foster parents and the agency giving service; the relationship of the parents' own experiences in growing up to their capacity for parenthood; community and cultural attitudes toward parents who cannot carry full responsibility.

STANDARD 5. Social Workers in CPS Shall Uphold the Authority to Protect the Child as Vested in State Law

Social Workers in CPS require specific knowledge of:

- The State's child abuse and neglect legislation as well as legislation pertaining to child custody, guardianship, and adoption;

- The legal definitions of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect; the legal basis of authority to protect the child; conditions under which this authority is used; legal basis for recognition of neglect or abuse by the juvenile court and for questioning the parents' ability to exercise their legal rights and obligations of parenthood;

- The use of legal systems; application of the law; preparation for court and testimony; the roles of court personnel; implementation of court orders; and interpretation of the above to children and their families;

- The function and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies and correctional agencies in relation to children and parents;

- The intervention options within the framework of the law; such as provision of services to children who need protection and to their families; provision of services to families who require supplemental care such as day care and homemaker services; and provision of services to children who need emergency, foster family or group care and/or permanency planning.

STANDARD 6. Social Workers in CPS Shall Demonstrate Skills Fundamental to the Profession of Social Work

Generic social work skills acquired through professional education, practicum, and previous work experiences are considered a prerequisite to effective CPS intervention. This includes the social worker's demonstrated skills in:

- Being able to listen, observe, communicate, interview, understand, confront, engage in mutual problem solving and conflict resolution;

- Enhancing the professional use of the client-social worker relationship by making appropriate use of authority in this relationship, and by applying one's own personality strengths and talents to the social work process;

- Being able to deal appropriately with apathy, hostility, resistance, and anger displayed by parents and/or children, including assessment of transference and counter-transference feelings;

- Working directly with parents, families and children on a crisis intervention and ongoing services basis;

- Making decisions and solving problems that vitally affect the lives of children and parents, while balancing their respective rights, opinions and feelings;

- Selecting appropriate resources for supplemental or substitute family care, and providing services related to their use;

- Knowing when and how to use supervision, consultation, and collaboration;

- Developing working relationships with individuals from various community groups/agencies/disciplines;

- Managing the involvement of multiple agencies in case situations, including the pressures that may arise from different professional perspectives; and,

- Timely completion of administrative tasks such as collecting and applying data, keeping records, evaluating client progress and program effectiveness.

IV.

Standards for the Administrator of the CPS Agency

Effective social work practice in CPS is directly related to the administrator's capacity to translate policies into services for endangered children and their families, and to provide child protective staff with the administrative tools and support systems necessary for intervention. Thus, the Standards presented in this section document the professional expectations of CPS administrators towards the promotion of effective social work practice in behalf of children and families. The administrator is expected to have an MSW degree from an accredited college or university, to have acquired a body of knowledge regarding the administrative process, and to have had direct CPS work experience.

STANDARD 7. The CPS Administrator, in Accordance With Legal Mandates, Shall Establish the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines Necessary for Effective Social Work Practice in Child Protection

To fulfill the expectations of this Standard, child protective tasks and activities need to be guided and supported by the administrator's:

- Adherence to hiring social work staff with accredited BSW and MSW degrees, demonstrated work skills, and characteristics which reflect the ethnic composition of the clientele served by the agency;
- Adherence to clearly written job descriptions, affirmative action and other personnel policies, and to grievance procedures;
- Delineation and differentiation of CPS work roles, responsibilities, and tasks along with appropriate delegation of authority;
- Augmentation of social work staff with other disciplines;
- Establishment of measures to ensure program and service accountability, including written policies and procedures for monitoring day-to-day program operations and for ensuring client confidentiality;
- Recognition of outstanding staff performance, as well as implementation of actions in response to poor staff performance;
- Establishment of operational definitions of child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and

exploitation of children;

- Annual evaluations available to supervisors with written documentation of their performance and with recommendations for appropriate future action; and,

- Provision of systematic administrative and evaluative reviews of the CPS program, and opportunities for board members and staff to participate in the development of program policies.

STANDARD 8. The CPS Administrator Shall Advocate for Sufficient Child Protective Program Funds and Adequate Working Conditions

To fulfill this Standard, the administrator is expected to work consistently toward the:

- Establishment of a salary schedule that is fair and reasonable with regard to the social worker's education, work experiences, and job responsibilities;

- Recruitment and allocation of program funds sufficient to emergency, ongoing and family support services;

- Establishment of sufficient work space, allowing for supervisor-staff and client-social worker privacy; that is, private offices for supervisors, a minimum of 100 square feet of office space per worker;

- Provision of individual telephone lines and access to transportation 100 percent of the time to ensure that child protective staff can keep in regular contact with their clients and with community agencies; and,

- Provision of sufficient clerical and case aide support services at a ratio of five social workers to each clerical assistant and to each case aide.

STANDARD 9. The CPS Administrator Shall Provide Leadership, Guidance and Support to Staff to Enhance Their Professional Skills and Well-Being

To compensate for the high physical and emotional demands placed upon CPS staff during their daily child protective activities, the administrator is to facilitate:

- Establishment of reasonable work loads for supervisors and staff; that is, five to seven workers per supervisor and 20 to 25 families per worker;

- Establishment of flexible work schedules, a means for overtime compensation for staff working more than 40 hours per week, a system for staff back-up, and opportunity for variety in CPS work assignments;

- Provision of appropriate and adequate supervision and multidisciplinary consultation services for supervisors and staff;

- Provision of opportunities and time, equivalent to twelve days per year, for staff development and continuing education experiences based upon an agency assessment of training needs;

- Promotion of activities and intervention approaches to reduce the physical risk to staff, stemming from potentially violent family or community situations; and

- Promotion of coordinated activities and working relationships among the various service divisions within the agency, with other community agencies, and with the court;

- Establishment of written assurances of liability protection for staff as well as legal representation in case-related court hearings.

STANDARD 10. The CPS Administrator Shall Demonstrate a Commitment to Twenty-Four Hour Child Protective Response Capacity and Service Availability.

The administrator's commitment to this Standard shall be demonstrated by:

- Establishment of the CPS agency as the focal point for the community's child protective efforts with child protective staff assigned to intervene, at all times, in behalf of endangered children;

- Assignment of CPS staff specifically hired to intervene after normal working hours and on weekends;

- Assumption of the ethical and legal responsibilities delegated to the agency to respond immediately to reports of child abuse and neglect, and to initiate court action, protective custody and/or emergency services; and,

- Development of crisis support services to children within their own homes as an alternative to emergency placement.

STANDARD 11. The CPS Administrator Shall Demonstrate a Commitment to Improving Agency and Community Services for Children and Families

The administrator's responsiveness to the needs of children and families served by the agency as well as to the needs of the community is to be shown by:

- Education of the community about the availability of and accessibility to, the twenty-four hour CPS response capacity;

- Provision of agency services which are readily available to children and their families and which are responsive to the varied needs of persons from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds;

- Promotion of inter-agency working relationships, written inter-agency service agreements, and coordination of community services necessary for a comprehensive child protective system that allows for direct access to nurses, psychologists, pediatricians, attorneys, and other disciplines;

- Application of knowledge gained from program evaluation to service delivery;

- Prevention of child abuse and neglect through family advocacy activities and efforts to improve community conditions having a negative impact on the welfare of children and families, and through legislative and educative efforts in behalf of children and families; and,

- Appropriate use of the media to promote public awareness of the needs of children and families and to educate the public about services available, while guarding endangered children's and families' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

V. Standards for the CPS Supervisor

The primary purpose of the supervisor is to ensure that the children, parents, and families requiring CPS intervention receive prompt and competent assistance from the child protective staff. Thus, the Standards presented in this section document the expectations of the supervisor toward accomplishment of this purpose.

STANDARD 12. The CPS Supervisor Shall Assume Multiple Professional Roles and Responsibility for the Authority That Accompanies These Roles

To meet the expectation of this Standard, the supervisor shall provide supportive consultation and leadership to agency and CPS staff while appropriately balancing the roles of teacher, manager, administrator, and service provider. The supervisor is expected to have an MSW degree from an accredited college or university, to have acquired a body of knowledge regarding the supervisory process, and to have had direct CPS work experience.

STANDARD 13. The CPS Supervisor Shall Provide Supervision to Child Protective Staff using a Social Work Process Orientation

A process orientation to supervision of staff includes:

- Integration of a comprehensive knowledge base with professional ethics, values, and direct child protective practice experiences;
- Demonstration of refined social work skills through the ongoing provision of direct services to CPS families;
- Understanding and application of adult learning theory and management techniques;
- Promotion of the social worker's use of self and self-awareness in the worker-supervisory relationship;
- Acceptance of responsibility for shared decision making and problem solving throughout the CPS process; and,
- Availability to staff facing crises in the field.

STANDARD 14. The CPS Supervisor Shall Promote Team Work Through the Use of Peer Supervision, Consultation, and Understanding of Group Process

The supervisor has a responsibility to promote team work both within the CPS unit and among all agency service units. Acceptance of this responsibility shall be demonstrated by the supervisor's:

- Management of own work-related stress, and assistance to staff and other agency supervisors in coping with their work-related stresses;
- Application of knowledge and skills in communicating, confronting, resolving conflicts, and making appropriate use of group dynamics and processes;
- Application of various forms of supervision, staff development, and training activities to the learning needs of staff;
- Differentiation and balance in the use of staff, with regard to matching worker strengths and professional interests with client and program needs;
- Annual evaluations available to staff with written documentation of their performance and with recommendations for appropriate future action; and,
- Completion of annual program evaluations with application of the knowledge gained to improve service delivery.

STANDARD 15. The CPS Supervisor Shall Work Toward the Development of Resources to Enhance Staff Practices and Agency Services

To meet the expectations of this Standard, the supervisor shall acknowledge and accept the functions and responsibilities of the middle management position. This position requires professional responsiveness to the needs of clients, staff, administrators, the agency and the community as demonstrated by:

- Consistent assessment of staff and program needs and the establishment of priorities with regard to these needs;
- Effective use of existing staff and program resources, including establishment of caseloads based on workers' skill level, severity of cases, existence of supplemental community resources, and geographic considerations;
- Collection of data regarding environmental factors having a significant impact on the family and

communication of that data to agency administrators;

- Communication of CPS knowledge and needs to agency administrators as a means of staff and client advocacy;

- Establishment of team work with administrators, supervisors and personnel from other community resources and agencies;

- Participation on a multidisciplinary child abuse and neglect team as the agency's representative; and,

- Acquisition and application of knowledge about the community's political and legislative processes to the development or expansion of resources for children and families.

STANDARD 16. The CPS Supervisor Shall Promote the Social Work Profession

The supervisor's compliance with this Standard includes:

- Acquisition of ACSW standing, professional licensing, and participation in professional organizations;

- Presentations of knowledge at professional conferences, workshops and seminars; and,

- Participation on state and local councils/committees/task forces, and at public hearings concerned with services for children and families.

VI.

Standards for the Child Protective Services Worker

The Standards presented in this section document the practice expectations of social workers throughout the various phases of direct CPS intervention. These expectations, when actively supported by CPS administrators and supervisors, enable social workers to carry out their responsibilities to:

- families and parents
- children
- the agency, and
- the community

Written documentation of all intervention activities is implicit in meeting the requirements of these Standards.

A. The Social Worker's Responsibility to Families and Parents

STANDARD 17. The CPS Worker Shall be Responsive to Reports of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

The social worker's responsiveness is first demonstrated by assisting the reporter through the difficult job of making a report, followed by:

- Immediate assessment of reports about endangered children, including anonymous and self-reports, through application of specialized telephone and face-to-face interviewing skills;
- Application of knowledge about the indicators of child abuse and neglect to practice situations;
- Evaluation of high risk situations coupled with appropriate measures to ensure personal safety;
- Acceptance and appropriate use of the legal and professional authority which distinguishes CPS intervention from other forms of social work intervention;
- Provision of timely and appropriate measures directed toward ensuring the child's safety and maintaining the family; and,
- Follow-up communication with the reporter while safeguarding the family's rights to confidentiality and privacy.

STANDARD 18. The CPS Worker Shall Competently Assess the Parents' Ability and Willingness to Protect the Child

Competent assessment practices require documentation, adherence to confidentiality guidelines and:

- Application of knowledge and sensitivity about different family life styles, child rearing patterns, and cultural and ethnic differences among families;
- Assessment of the environmental factors within the home, school, neighborhood, and community that have an impact on the family;
- Discussion about and resolution of conflicting opinions and values regarding appropriate standards of care for children and exercising professional judgment without being judgmental;
- Establishment of assessment priorities based on the evaluation of risk to the child;
- Demonstration of the ability to make decisions which take into account the rights and needs of children, parents, and families;
- Commitment to hostile, resistant, or apathetic families through persistent outreach and offers of supportive and concrete services;
- Recognition of the limits of CPS responsibility and the parents' right to be free of involuntary services when there is no risk to the child; and,
- Acknowledgement of the need of some parents to be free of parenting responsibilities either temporarily or permanently.

STANDARD 19. The CPS Worker Shall Engage the Family in Using Its Own Strengths and Resources Throughout the Service Planning Process

Engagement of families in the service planning process requires:

- Full exploration of family needs and alternatives to family separation;
- Identification of each family member's strengths and the use of these strengths in the problem solving process;
- Development of service/treatment goals for and with each family member, time-limited steps to accomplish these goals, and target dates for completion and evaluation;

- Exploration and selection of remedial measures and resources which are based on differential use of social work methods in accordance with varying family needs and dynamics;

- Interpretation of the family's needs and problems to community resources so that their approaches or responses to the family can be modified; and,

- Preparation of families for use of resources and plans for monitoring and follow-up.

STANDARD 20. The CPS Worker Shall Provide Direct and Intensive Services to Parents to Strengthen Their Capacity to Care for Their Children

Expectations for meeting this Standard include:

- Promotion of parents' strengths and self-esteem by using a humanistic approach, viewing work together as a partnership, a joint venture;

- Selection and application of various treatment modalities appropriate to the needs and strengths of the parents; for example, crisis intervention, casework, group work, marital and family therapy;

- Maintenance of relationships with the family by being direct, active, and responding immediately to points of family crisis;

- Capacity to balance the parents' needs for dependency with those for independency;

- Commitment to seek supervisory or specialized professional consultation regarding the progress toward case goals; and,

- Preparation of the family whenever a transfer to another social worker or service provider is necessary.

STANDARD 21. The CPS Worker Shall be Prepared to Initiate and Follow Through on Court Action in the Child's Behalf

The initiation of court action is an agency team decision requiring legal counsel and legal representation. Court action also requires:

- Collection of information needed to document the abuse and/or neglect of the child, and the need for court action as part of the service plan;

- Application of knowledge about the legal system; court process; the social worker's use of the

court's authority; and possible court dispositions of actual case situations;

- Cooperation with the judicial and law enforcement systems;
- Assistance to the child and family throughout the court process, including preparation, information about all legal steps, and follow-up; and,
- Provision of informed testimony in court.

STANDARD 22. The CPS Worker Shall Use Social Work Processes in the Termination of Services to a Family

Meeting the expectations of this Standard is to be evidenced by the CPS social worker's:

- Ongoing involvement of the family in decision making and in evaluation of progress leading to transfer or termination of services;
- Sufficient preparation for termination and establishment of supports to continue beyond CPS intervention;
- Demonstration of sensitivity to parental and family feelings associated with loss of the worker's and agency's support; and,
- Recognition of the family's right to be free of CPS services as well as its right to initiate a renewal of services.

STANDARD 23. The CPS Worker Shall Manage the Personal Feelings Associated with Providing Child Protective Services

By managing the common feelings engendered by the CPS process, the social worker is greatly increasing the likelihood of effective intervention. Feelings experienced may include anger, fears of personal physical harm or of not being in control, anxiety about making vital decisions, and ambivalence toward some parents and some children. The social worker also may have some concerns about feeling inadequate, totally responsible for families, being victimized, or being over-involved with families. It is expected that the social worker will seek assistance from supervisors, colleagues and others with these feelings, will change case plans, as appropriate, in response to increased self understanding, and will also offer assistance and support to colleagues.

B. The Social Worker's Responsibility to Endangered Children

STANDARD 24. The CPS Worker Shall Continuously Assess the Presence and Level of Risk to All Children in the Family

Social work practice in CPS requires a 24-hour commitment to children—at the time of reports of suspected abuse and neglect, during ongoing service provision, and during family crises. Further, the social worker must be prepared, at any time, to initiate court action, protective custody, and/or medical services to ensure the child's safety, health, and welfare.

Such continuous assessment requires:

- Evaluation of each child's safety and well-being in the family initially and regularly thereafter through first-hand observation and interviewing;
- Evaluation of the parents' ability and willingness to protect the child;
- Implementation of decisions to ensure the child's safety and well-being; and, as necessary, the initiation of emergency services;
- Integration of knowledge about cultural and ethnic differences into the assessment process; and,
- Arrangement of diagnostic evaluations.

STANDARD 25. The CPS Worker Shall Engage in Ongoing Service Planning to Maintain or to Reunite Children With Their Own Families

To meet the expectations of this Standard, the social worker shall operate on the belief that a child has the right to be with his/her own family, fully exploring all alternatives to placement. When temporary placement is necessary, it is to be made as close to the child's own home is possible, with immediate plans established for the child's return home. When the child cannot be returned to his/her own home, the social worker shall seek a permanent alternative for the child. To carry out these objectives, there shall be:

- Implementation of a specific service plan that is responsive to the child's needs and strengths, with active involvement of the child in the planning process;
- Delineation within the service plan of specific goals, steps to accomplishment, and target dates for completion and evaluation;

- Full use of any community resources necessary to meet the child's needs; and,
- Arrangement of regular and frequent parental visits for the child who is placed out of his/her own home.

STANDARD 26. The CPS Worker Shall Ensure that Endangered Children Participate in the Planning and Direction of Their Lives

Although CPS intervention has traditionally focused on the child, most services have been directed to parents. Today, there is greater recognition of the child's right to, and frequent need for, direct services. Thus, to meet the requirements of this Standard, the social worker shall engage the child in decisions regarding the need for direct services, and shall ensure that needed support and counseling services are received. Other requirements of this Standard include:

- A commitment to continue to learn about children, to enhance skills in direct work with children, and to apply self-awareness to these processes;
- Demonstration of the ability to work through parental resistance to others becoming involved with their child;
- Application of specialized interviewing and communication skills with the child;
- Intervention with the child to help him/her cope with feelings of depression, guilt, anger and loss;
- Provision of assistance to the child to help reduce provocative behaviors and/or to help cope with parental inadequacies;
- Promotion of the child's self esteem by building upon the child's individualized strengths;
- Preparation of the older adolescent for independent living and self sufficiency;
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities when the case is shared with other service providers; and,
- Application of the process of termination when direct services are no longer necessary.

STANDARD 27. As Part of the Agency Team, the CPS Worker Shall Pursue Permanency Planning for Children and Shall Initiate Action to Terminate Parental Rights, as Necessary

When the social worker's efforts to maintain or to return the child to his/her own family are unsuccessful

ful (that is, the parents are unable to engage in or carry out the plans necessary to make this possible), the social worker is expected to seek another, permanent alternative for the child. Documentation of the worker's efforts to strengthen the family, and the child's and the parents' progress needs to be recorded consistently for every case. In addition, the permanency planning process involves:

- Implementation of a time limited plan that ensures the child's right to belong to someone;
- Use of emergency and foster family care services only as temporary substitutes;
- Demonstration of sensitivity to the child's individualized feelings and behaviors associated with separation and loss of own family and to the child's new experiences with the foster family;
- Initiation of court action for termination of parental rights when all other measures have failed; including preparation of the child for court; collection of information; multidisciplinary collaboration; informed testimony; and implementation of court orders;
- Establishment of team work with foster family care and adoption units; and,
- Preparation of the child for any transfer of the case to another social worker or another service provider.

STANDARD 28. The CPS Worker Shall Consistently Work Toward the Enhancement of Resources for Children Within the Agency and the Community

Demonstration of the social worker's compliance with this Standard includes:

- Implementation of activities directed toward meeting the individualized needs of each endangered child known to the worker;
- Documentation of needs and recommendations for additional resources for endangered children and/or for changes in the CPS system to better serve children; and
- Education of others about the needs of children, in general, and about the needs of abused and neglected children in particular.

C. The Social Worker's Responsibility to the Agency

STANDARD 29. The CPS Worker Shall Accept the Authority Inherent in Child Protection and the Responsibilities Delegated by the Agency to Carry Out This Authority

Child protection requires that the social worker accept the professional and legal authority which accompanies the position. Acceptance of this authority is manifested by the social worker's compliance with state law, agency policies and administrative directives.

STANDARD 30. The CPS Worker Shall Adhere to Agency Policies, Procedures, Evaluations, and State Licensing Requirements, Using Constructive Channels for Bringing About Needed Change

As integral members of the agency, CPS social workers are to conform to the expectations that are set by the agency and to work toward constructive change. However, the assumption of this Standard is that the agency's expectations and the professional social work expectations are compatible. In the event that some incompatibility arises between the two sets of expectations, social workers shall conform to the standards of the profession as delineated in the *NASW Code of Ethics*.

STANDARD 31. The CPS Worker Shall Establish Working Relationships with Other Program Staff, Recognizing the Importance of All Agency Programs

Child protective efforts fall within a continuum of agency programs established to better the lives of children, adults, and families. It is extremely important for CPS social workers to view their efforts within the context of the entire agency's efforts and to know, appreciate, and respect the needs, direction, and responsibilities of other workers. Further it is expected that they promote intra-agency team work; participate in agency policy and program decisions; contribute to agency task forces; and communicate formally and informally with other program staff.

STANDARD 32. The CPS Worker Shall Assume Responsibility for Learning in Supervision

Demonstration of compliance with this Standard includes the social worker's:

- Assessment of own learning and professional growth needs, personality strengths and weaknesses;
- Acceptance of responsibility for shared decision making and problem solving;
- Identification of case priorities and sharing of case information with the supervisor;
- Establishment of caseload priorities and meeting these priorities through self discipline and self management; and,
- Application of knowledge gained from supervision to the delivery of services.

STANDARD 33. The CPS Worker Shall Participate on Multidisciplinary Child Abuse and Neglect Case Consultation Teams

Effective use of consultation requires the capacity to present complex cases concisely and thoughtfully, asking for assistance with specific issues and concerns. The CPS Social Worker shall apply the knowledge gained from the team to actual practice by ensuring implementation of the team's recommendations.

STANDARD 34. The CPS Worker Shall Apply Research, Program and Case Evaluations to Practice, and Shall Collect Data in Support of the Agency's Information System

To meet the expectations of this Standard, CPS social workers, along with the CPS administrator and supervisor, shall extend their knowledge and skills by professional reading, participation in research and program evaluation activities, and attendance at professional and staff development seminars. In turn, they are to integrate this knowledge into improved child protective practices. Concurrently, social workers shall keep records and gather the statistics necessary for the management and planning of agency programs.

D. The Social Worker's Responsibility to the Community

STANDARD 35. The CPS Worker Shall Promote Collaborative Working Relationships Among Community Agencies and the Court Toward Establishment of a Comprehensive Child Protective System

A comprehensive child protective system requires efforts from all human services agencies to share knowledge and responsibility for service provision. Along with the CPS administrator and supervisor, the CPS social worker is responsible for:

- Identification of a liaison from the agency to interpret the CPS program and to facilitate collaborative working relationships with the community agencies and with the court;
- Preparation of community resources for case referrals;
- Application of a team work approach to intervention and to case decision making and problem solving;
- Ongoing communication with resources about client needs and progress, and about agency service limitations; and,
- Identification of mutual training and consultation needs and implementation of a plan to meet those needs.

STANDARD 36. The CPS Worker Shall Strive to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect by Promoting Resources in the Community to Support and Strengthen the Family Unit

The support systems established by communities to strengthen families can help prevent child abuse and neglect. Thus, toward the goal of prevention, the social worker shall: provide outreach activities; educate the community and other professionals about existing resources, and assist families in making use of these resources; participate on community task forces concerned with the service needs of families; and encourage the agency's use of volunteers, parent aides, and self-help groups to provide support to families.

VII.

Standards for the Social Worker Employed in a Setting Other Than Child Protective Services

All social workers have professional responsibility for supplementing the efforts of CPS in the identification, assessment, treatment, and prevention of child abuse and neglect. The following Standards delineate the minimum child protective practice expectations of social workers who are employed in settings other than CPS.

STANDARD 37. The Social Worker Shall Acquire Knowledge About Child Abuse and Neglect, the Local CPS Process, and Child Welfare Services

All social workers need to have basic knowledge of the indicators of child abuse and neglect, factors contributing to the problem, and community resources to help resolve the problem. This knowledge is to be integrated into daily professional practice, and shared with other professionals to make early identification of child abuse and neglect possible and to deter misconceptions about CPS intervention.

STANDARD 38. The Social Worker Shall Comply with Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Laws and Procedures

It is the responsibility of every social worker to obtain knowledge of the state's child abuse and neglect laws and procedures, and to share this knowledge with employers and colleagues. In addition, whenever it is necessary to report a case of suspected child abuse or neglect, the social worker shall collaborate with CPS and, as appropriate, shall explain the report and the CPS process to family members.

STANDARD 39. The Social Worker Shall Share Responsibility with CPS for Providing Endangered Children and Their Families with Needed Services

Social workers are expected to promote the delivery of supplemental and treatment services to endangered children and their families within their respective work settings. Compliance with the intent of this Standard is demonstrated by:

- Joint case planning and service delivery with CPS;

- The development of specialized services and treatment approaches with CPS for endangered children and their families;

- The provision of consultation services and/or training to CPS staff; and,

- The establishment of guidelines for client confidentiality that ensure the continued safety of the child.

STANDARD 40. The Social Worker Shall Advocate for Community Services to Protect Children, Strengthen Families, and Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect

All social workers have responsibility for participation in activities that can help protect children and strengthen families. These activities may include: testifying at public hearings in support of the CPS agency's budget and staff requests; showing support for needed legislative changes in behalf of children and families; participating on community task forces concerned with human service delivery; and encouraging the development of community resources and programs to meet the needs of children and families.

Taxonomy of Standards for Social Work Practice in Child Protection

STANDARDS FOR ALL SOCIAL WORKERS

- Comply with NASW Code of Ethics
- Demonstrate acceptance of professional values.
- Demonstrate skills fundamental to social work.

STANDARDS FOR ALL SOCIAL WORKERS IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES AGENCIES

- Uphold the authority to protect children as vested in state law.
- Possess specialized knowledge of children and families and about the dynamics of child abuse and neglect.
- Display social work knowledge and understanding of resources serving children.

STANDARDS FOR CPS WORKERS

Responsibilities to Families and Parents

- Demonstrate speedy responsiveness to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Assess parents' ability and willingness to protect the child.
- Engage the family in using its own strengths and resources.
- Provide direct and intensive services to parents to strengthen their capacity to care for children.
- Initiate and follow through on court action in the child's behalf when necessary.
- Use social work processes in the termination of services to a family.
- Manage personal feelings associated with providing CPS.

Responsibilities to Endangered Children

- Assess the presence and level of risk to all children in the family.
- Engage in ongoing service planning to maintain or reunite children with their own families.
- Ensure that endangered children participate in the planning and direction of their lives.
- Pursue permanency planning for children and initiate action to terminate parental rights as necessary.

- Enhance resources for children within the agency and the community.

Responsibilities to the Agency

- Accept the authority inherent in child protection and the responsibility delegated by the agency to carry out this authority.
- Adhere to agency policies, procedures, evaluations and licensing requirements.
- Establish working relationships with other program staff within the agency.
- Assume responsibility for learning in supervision.
- Participate on multidisciplinary child abuse and neglect case consultation teams.
- Apply research, program and case evaluations to practice and collect data in support of the agency's information systems.

Responsibilities to the Community

- Promote collaborative working relationship among community agencies toward establishing a comprehensive child protective system.
- Promote community resources to support the family toward the goal of prevention of child abuse and neglect.

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Assume multiple professional roles and acceptance of authority inherent in those roles.
- Provide supervision using a social work process orientation.
- Promote team work through use of peer supervision, consultation and understanding of group process.
- Develop resources to enhance staff practices and agency services.

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR CPS ADMINISTRATORS

- Establish policies, procedures and guidelines to facilitate effective social work practice in CPS.
- Advocate for adequate program funds, work space and working conditions.
- Provide leadership and support to staff.

- Demonstrate commitment to 24 hour CPS response capacity and service availability.
- Demonstrate commitment to improving agency and community services for children and families.

STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS EMPLOYED IN SETTINGS OTHER THAN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

- Acquire knowledge about child abuse and neglect, the local CPS process and child welfare services.
- Adhere to child abuse and reporting laws and procedures.
- Share responsibility with CPS for providing needed services to endangered children and their families.
- Advocate for community services to protect children, strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Code of Ethics

SUMMARY OF MAJOR PRINCIPLES

I.

The Social Worker's Conduct and Comportment as a Social Worker

A. *Propriety.* The social worker should maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity or identity as social worker.

B. *Competence and Professional Development.* The social worker should strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions.

C. *Service.* The social worker should regard as primary the service obligation of the social work profession.

D. *Integrity.* The social worker should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.

E. *Scholarship and Research.* The social worker engaged in study and research should be guided by the conventions of scholarly inquiry.

II.

The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Clients

F. *Primacy of Clients' Interests.* The social worker's primary responsibility is to clients.

G. *Rights and Prerogatives of Clients.* The social worker should make every effort to foster maximum self-determination on the part of clients.

H. *Confidentiality and Privacy.* The social worker should respect the privacy of clients and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.

I. *Fees.* When setting fees, the social worker should ensure that they are fair, reasonable, considerate, and commensurate with the service performed and with due regard for the clients' ability to pay.

III.

The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Colleagues

J. *Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy.* The social worker should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.

K. *Dealing with Colleagues' Clients.* The social worker has the responsibility to relate to the clients of colleagues with full professional consideration.

IV.

The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Employers and Employing Organizations

L. *Commitments to Employing Organizations.* The social worker should adhere to commitments made to the employing organizations.

V.

The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to the Social Work Profession

M. *Maintaining the Integrity of the Profession.* The social worker should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession.

N. *Community Service.* The social worker should assist the profession in making social services available to the general public.

O. *Development of Knowledge.* The social worker should take responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge for professional practice.

VI.

The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Society

P. *Promoting the General Welfare.* The social worker should promote the general welfare of society.

The above constitutes a summary of the Code effective July 1, 1980, as adopted by the 1979 NASW Delegate Assembly. The complete text, including preamble and expanded definition of principles, is available on request.

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**National Professional Resource Center on Child
Abuse and Neglect**

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About NASW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers in the world. As of January 1992, over 136,000 members participated in 55 chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the international community.

The association works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. NASW provides a variety of membership benefits including credentials (Academy of Certified Social Workers, Academy of Certified Baccalaureate Social Workers, the Qualified Clinical Social Worker, and the School Social Work Specialist) and insurance (professional liability, health, and life). The NASW Press, which produces *Social Work* and the *NASW News* as membership benefits as well as three other journals and several books each year, is a major service in professional development. In January 1991, the association released a major proposal for National Health Care, a single-payer system.

For more information on NASW membership or programs, write NASW, 750 First Street, NE, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20002-4241 (telephone: 1-800-638-8799 or 1-202-408-8600).

